

# ***TIGHT BINDING BOOK***

# THE ORACLE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JAMES H. COUSINS

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Hearken unto a verser who may chance  
Rhyme thee to good . . .

GEORGE HERBERT

# THE ORACLE

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GANESH & CO., MADRAS

1938



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## SONNETS

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## PROEM

BECAUSE I was not wise  
As other poets be,  
And had not sense to see  
Beauty in women's eyes  
As Beauty's end and sum ;  
Nor gathered song to feed  
Imagination's fire  
With the incongruous weed  
Of bodily desire ;  
But shrewdly sought to thresh  
Out of the husks of flesh  
Soul-profitable grain,  
And shake from withering things  
Unwithering winnowings,  
My foolish feet have come  
On unexpected pain.  
For now, when years in front  
Grow fewer than behind,  
Song-comrades of my youth,  
Re-living the old hunt  
For life's futilities,  
A grim new pleasure find,  
That is to me denied,  
In growling at the tooth  
Of time and slow disease  
Gnawing their wrinkling rind.  
With Jeremian joy  
They chant of things that cloy,  
What dies and what has died ;  
While I, condemned to sing

What knows no perishing,  
The winging, not the wing,  
Monotonously go  
My spirit-way. And so,  
When age's breath benumbs  
Feet that have grown uncouth,  
And fingers are all thumbs ;  
Outcast, as man and boy,  
From their lugubrious joy,  
I shall pass through a door,  
And perish in my youth—  
At seventysix or more ;  
Because I was not wise  
As other poets be,  
And, seeking but to see  
In Beauty's glamorous eyes  
Immortal enterprise,  
Perversely chose to sing  
What knows no perishing,  
The winging, not the wing,  
And sang in man and maid  
Beauty that cannot fade.

## THE ORACLE



## THE ORACLE

To G.

“ . . . AFTER a wavering time  
I died from feet to head ;  
Then floated free to climb  
Beyond long clouds of dread  
Into a place that had  
The sun and moon for doors ;  
Where Shapes austere glad  
On constellated floors  
Wove in zodiacal dance  
From threads of midnight and morn  
The cradling circumstance  
Of worlds that would be born.

And, passionately grave,  
With eyes that held the sea,  
One moved as moves a wave,  
And held out hands to me,  
White hands of Goddess-mould ;  
And in a voice that swelled  
To ocean-deeps, ‘ Behold ! ’  
She said. And I beheld  
—Raised from my knees by Her  
As tangles on a tide—

What set my veins astir  
With wonder. Side by side,  
Close in a casket wrought  
By Danaan smiths from spray  
That moon- and sun-light caught,  
A pearl and ruby lay—  
Twin gems of heavenly mould  
By their own radiance lit ;  
Enshrined, ensphered, ensouled ;  
Mightily exquisite ;  
Holy impregnable white,  
Haughty implacable red !  
' Goddess ! unseal my sight,  
My soul's true sight ! ' I said.

Then She, in rhythmic speech  
That the sea-murmuring had  
Of surf along a beach,  
Made me divinely glad  
With the uncovered sense  
Of cloud-wrapped mysteries  
That through the brain condense  
To words that might be these.—

' Who deem the Gods are dead,  
Or born of haunted brain

Out of primeval dread,  
Have their own Godhood slain,  
Because their feet have flown  
From ancient innocent ways,  
Their eyes too guilty grown  
Into themselves to gaze,  
Lest on their darkness break  
Sudden disturbing day,  
And spirit-vision shake  
Alliances with clay.

Think not the suppliant fire  
Was lit in vain to Powers  
Fashioned from man's desire :  
Lo ! that desire is ours ;  
Sparks of our noonless dawn  
Dropped from ancestral skies  
That we shall blow upon  
Till flame to flame arise,  
And the tumultuous  
Dreams and desires of men  
That wandered forth from us  
Shall wander home again.

O you whose feet have climbed  
Our hidden citadel !



Time's eye on the untimed,  
Behold, remember, tell  
How they who bravely win  
High aspiration's wings  
Shall reach our heaven within  
Far or familiar things.

The Danaan Godhead we,  
Shadowed in song and tale,  
Who touch with ecstasy  
The dreaming of the Gael ;  
Yet on dim banners, torn  
Or lost in history's flames,  
Age after age have worn  
Known or forgotten names  
That still with chants divine  
Can fill the opened ear :  
The moon-white Niav mine ;  
My Lord's, the boundless Lir.  
To us the Dagda gave  
For mutual empery  
The realm of tide and wave—  
And seas within the sea,  
Whose crests and hollows flash  
Under celestial wind,  
Whose crystal waters wash  
Man's sullied heart and mind

Age after patient age  
We wait our witnesses ;  
And unto eyes grown sage  
Our secret signs confess.  
Mine is the ultimate calm ;  
Struggle and conquest his ;  
The pearl of pearls I am ;  
My Lord the ruby is.  
These glyphs of Soul and Mind  
In consecrated hands  
Bear back to Earth, and find  
A bard who understands.  
He shall incarnate strong  
Lovely detergent Powers  
Through ceremonial song  
That echo is of ours.'

With that the vision broke  
In silence vastly sweet ;  
And slowly I awoke,  
Reborn from head to feet,  
Out of a place that has  
Birth, death, for swinging doors ;  
Where Shapes ancestral pass  
Along star-stippled floors,

Weaving in holy dance  
From threads of night and morn  
The cradling circumstance  
Of worlds that will be born."

*Danaan* : "the people of Dana," the ancient Irish pantheon.

*Dagda* : the Irish all-Father.

*Gael* : here used for the Irish branch of the Celtic race.

Dublin 1904,  
Kotagiri, India, 1934.

## OTHER POEMS

## NOTE TO "SOUNDLESS MUSIC"

During the Viceroyalty in India of one who, in his early manhood, had been a maker of lyrical music, order was maintained in a period of political excitement by Emergency Ordinances which superseded the usual process of law. These Ordinances were ultimately pressed into the ordinary Penal Code. Against this procedure, which she regarded as an unnecessary extremity of severity, a western lady, who, like the Viceroy, was a musician, publicly protested. On declining to give heavy bonds to keep silence for a year, she was sent for that period to the Madras Presidency Jail for Women at Vellore.

This is the factual background of the story of how a musician met the deprivation of prison-life imposed by another musician, and kept up her pianoforte practice by using the edge of her prison bed as an imaginary keyboard.

SECTION I. The Puranas are ancient Hindu stories that figuratively express cosmic and psychological ideas.

The shanachie is a traditional story-teller of Ireland.

According to Hindu lore, the universe is a play created by Brahma for the diversion of the Immortals.

Karma is the Hindu law of cause and effect in action.

The vina is a stringed musical instrument which stands to India as the harp does to Ireland.

Palestrina was one of the greatest composers of Catholic Church music.

SECTION II. The yogis of India usually sit for meditation on a deer-skin.

The Question alights on the Himalaya (accent on *ma*) Mountains, which physically, as the highest ranges on the planet from which the soundless music rises, and spiritually, as the habitations of seekers after spiritual perfection, are specially accessible to the heaven-world. From thence the Question proceeds to tropical South India where Vellore Jail is situated.

# SOUNDLESS MUSIC

## *To the Musician*

### I

STRIPPED of circumstance and name,  
All our stories are the same ;  
Symboling the spirit's trial  
Through assertion and denial,  
In the tales of God and Man as  
Chanted by the wise Puranas,  
Homer by the Grecian sea,  
And the Irish shanachie.

For there is no plot but that  
Spun by the Playwright when He sat  
By the primal Wheel of Life  
Out of strands of calm and strife,  
Downward pull, ascensive curve,  
Bovine torpor, artist-nerve,  
Freezing hilltops, burning levels,  
Dreams of gods, desires of devils,  
Joy that has riposte in pain,  
Spur and countermanding rein,  
Crystal vision, muddled wits—  
All the pairs of opposites.  
These rehearsed and garmented,  
“ The Play begins,” the Playwright said.

Forth they fare into the lists,  
Life's assigned protagonists ;

Partners in the cosmic drama,  
Born within the brain of Brahma,  
Helping out each other's karma ;  
And in Brooklyn or in Burma  
Finding stage and audience ample  
For their mumming. For example—

Two, whose thoughts on Duty run,  
Willing, or unwilling, done,  
Pause no moment to regret a  
Stroke or thrust in the vendetta  
Life splays outwards through its  
prism  
In affined antagonism.  
One of these, whose heart had long  
Sentimentalized in song,  
Now, in proud vicegerency,  
Promulgates the stern decree  
That with iron Ordinance  
Would retard life's quickening dance  
In a people casting age,  
Tasting freedom's beverage :  
While the other, born to be  
Music's life-long devotee,  
Breaks the paralysing ring  
With intrepid challenging  
Till she finds her fate—to dwell  
Solus in a granite cell,  
Exiled from her life's oblation,  
And from music's ministration.

Yet, when day has clashed its door  
In the hills behind Vellore,  
And the warder turns the key  
On the nightly mystery  
Where her lamp-light sharply glows,  
That unprisoned spirit knows  
Through deprivation secret bliss  
Won by simple artifice,  
Wit that bends the things that be  
To the spirit's needs, as she  
Feeds the famished music-mood  
On imagination's food.  
Seated lowly by her bed,  
She, with swaying greying head  
Timing hands that swing like sedge  
Left and right along its edge,  
Simulates the sister-fire  
Paderewski strikes from wire,  
Conjures heat without the flame,  
And the soul behind the name,  
Making soundless music there  
For no earthly listener.

Now, upon that spirit-strain,  
She has passed the prisoning brain,  
Burst the bars of nerve and tissue,  
Climbed the clouded peak whence issue  
The primordial Ordinances  
Of creation's circumstances,  
Life's definitive designs—



Rhythms, gestures, tinctures, lines,  
That, through mingled brain and heart  
Make the ritual of Art.  
Thus absolved from hand and ear,  
She through subtler sense can hear  
Tones more tenuous than the vina's,  
More ensouled than Palestrina's ;  
And can feel the wind that stirs  
Round celestial auditors.

## II

God from ecstasy profound  
Wakes at an unusual sound,  
Saying : "Not the wave that swings  
Brazenly from Saturn's rings  
Smitten cymbal-wise, or far  
Chorusing of star and star,  
Or galactic utterance,  
Shatters my aeonian trance;  
But a speech that has no need  
For the cry of winded reed,  
Sob of string, or tympan's roll,  
Being Music's naked soul  
As within my heart it stirred  
When I shaped the primal Word."

Then the Arch-Musician turns  
Sight that through the systems burns  
Questioning each singing sphere

For the sound that strikes His ear  
Far more inly than the hymn  
Of His flashing seraphim,  
Being music that has found  
Voice beyond the need of sound.

Forth the flaming Question sweeps ;  
Down the stellar stairway leaps ;  
On the fluctuating verge  
Where the glittering systems merge  
Tracks a gleam whose throb apprizes  
Whence that soundless music rises  
Flanked by those distracting stars,  
Passionate Venus, puissant Mars.

Now the Question hides from sight  
In the deep disguise of light,  
Lest its inner radiance be  
Darkened by mortality,  
And the mist from human draff  
Blur its heavenward heliograph ;  
Tacks from sky to sky until  
Pilgrims to a snow-cowled hill  
Where Himalayan winters melt  
Round the yogi's sambur-pelt,  
See a glory dropping sheer  
From a cloud-built belvedere,  
And in reverence profound  
Put their foreheads to the ground.

When they cease to bend and pray,  
Thunder thumping far away  
Is the cipherless reply  
Of a spirit vanished by,  
Southwards to a place of palms,  
Where escape from sunshine crams  
Night with commerce, bandied words,  
Chantings, cries of sleepy birds,  
Mixed with music thinly clear  
Only spirit-ears can hear  
When the day has clashed its door  
In the hills behind Vellore,  
And the warder turns the key  
On an artist's mystery.

There that embassy from Light,  
Lucid Day to lurid night,  
Diamond Skies to dusty ground,  
Tracking that unbodied sound,  
Masks its glory to engage  
In celestial espionage ;  
Moves by metamorphosis  
Into flames that shake and hiss,  
Till it finds its fate—to fall  
As a lamp-gleam on a wall,  
And a poignant parable  
Signal from a granite cell,  
Where a woman's greying head  
Sways beside her penal bed  
As her hands, like wind-blown sedge

Glimmering on its iron edge,  
Make the soundless music there  
That awoke the Listener.

### III

Thus (or haply otherhow)  
Past the Pleiads and the Plough  
Went the news, translating clear  
For the universal Ear  
Earthly jargon into pure  
Heavenly nomenclature.

And (if mortal speech may tell  
Mystery ineffable,  
Like the saga that the sun  
Tells to Jeans and Eddington)  
Clouds that on the hills came down  
Paraphrased a god-like frown  
That, a cosmic instant after,  
Melted in celestial laughter  
As the sun-god, rearsen,  
Glorified a granite prison,  
And, with eyes washed clean of malice,  
Smiled on a viceregal palace.

For the Playwright in the wings  
Watching how the Play of things  
Moves through happiness or hurt in  
Oscillations towards the curtain

That shall close the Story planned,  
Raised a momentary hand  
Thrilled with threat—but let it fall  
As a lamp-gleam on a wall  
Told how prison bars could be  
Freedom's blind accessory,  
By evoking in a cell  
Soundless music's miracle  
That had broadcast through the night  
Mingled loveliness and light,  
And beyond the planets seven  
Mixed the souls of earth and heaven.

## HAREM

NOW that I have a while to spare,  
And rhymes are dancing round my head,  
Strange, for a theme, I do not care  
If France go blue, or Spain go red ;

And count of little consequence  
What Gandhi says, or does not say,  
Or Wilhelm's lost omnipotence,  
Or the Dictators' ruthless way.

For all these things will gorge the heap  
Time will into oblivion shove.  
Only one theme its place will keep,  
The ancient garbled theme of love.

No ! not the sentimental whine  
With which the crooner smears the air,  
Making of song a concubine,  
And life a sly philanderer.

Oh ! what has he of love to tell ?  
And what have they to tell of love  
Who kneel not in its chasuble,  
Nor in its holy ritual move ?

Oh ! I could croon, nor be believed,  
Of love that makes their passion pale :  
For I have loved, and love received  
From women, in the heart's entail,

Not one by cancelled one, but six,  
And all at once, and all the time :  
Each my whole heart's imperatrix  
In the precession of a chime :

Each over-toned and under-toned  
By all the rest ; so that no more  
The heart of varied rapture owned  
At thirty than at sixtyfour.

These will suffice as theme for song,  
Now that I have a while to spare,  
And for the kinks of right and wrong  
Less than a withered rose-leaf care.

One is a whetstone making keen  
The sickle of the reaping mind :  
And one life's highways brushes clean  
With music's paradisal wind.

One the dull air divinely shakes  
With the soft stir of spirit-wings :  
And one into her being takes  
And gives the joy of natural things.

One can the veins to valour start  
With chivalry for wrong's redress :  
And one can pacify the heart  
With love's all-saying silentness.

Day brings no ennui while the sun  
From solstice unto solstice swings ;  
Nor night, while stellar athletes run  
Around the planetary rings.

And while these women share my bread,  
Small chance has love of going stale,  
Or a spent heart to blur the head  
With shreds of illusion's veil.

Yet, though each silently resolves  
A seeming separate intent,  
Each the soul-sisterhood involves,  
Subtly the same, though different.

Each in her own unique dear way  
Looks through the same brown-brilliant eye  
As when we wed, one April day ;  
And each on the one day will die,

And go where Light all shades will drown  
(And may my death-day be the same !)  
And God will crown them with one crown,  
And call them by one flowery name.

And you who would my myth construe,  
And learn love's never-ageing lore  
Wherein the old remains the new,  
And spending only swells its store,



Must ponder Ireland's trampled times,  
When, to elude the invader's flames,  
The patriot poets warmed their rhymes  
With half a dozen worshipped names—

“ Daughter of Sorrow,” “ Little black Rose,”  
And others that the heart-strings thrill :  
Yet the one love of loves they chose  
Was Ireland, Ireland, Ireland still !

Even thus my stainless loves I hymn,  
Changing, unchanged, till song be done,  
Since God, in a celestial whim,  
Enshrined them in the form of one !

## LONGWOOD SHOLA

### *Kotagiri, Nilgiris*

DAWN, that calls the soul from sleep,  
Brings the hungry bulbul's *yeep* . . .  
*Yeep* . . . , and that most final sound,  
Peaches plumping on the ground  
As his reckless slashing sabre  
Ends a season's cosmic labour,  
Laying low high fruitage ripened  
For the early riser's stipend.

And, in truth, why should there be  
Less than prodigality  
When the wakening woods are choric,  
And the firmament plethoric,  
With the promise of abundance  
After all things step to one dance  
When the domineering rain  
Drowns all else in its own strain ?

Meanwhile, morning's invitation  
Calls, through garden and plantation,  
To the shades of Longwood *shola*,  
Where the feet weigh scarce a *tola*  
Poised on pathways thickly strown  
With the leaves of seasons gone,  
Stirring from deciduous death  
Nature's vitalising breath.

Overhead slim branches swirl  
As the bright-brown barking squir'l  
Plays at gentleman-and-lady  
To and fro, and shy cicadae  
Bandy wiry-shrill persuading  
(*Twing twing TWANG*, such serenading !)  
Universal invitation  
Myriad-masked throughout creation.

Here and there fawn-flowered spirea  
Stand as an inspired idea  
In the brain of earth, a relic  
Of the ministry angelic  
From whose touch all beauty springs  
Into joy of leaves and wings.

Even such rapture raises me,  
All becomes a Mystery.  
Water among pebbles tinkling  
Needs no ceremonial sprinkling  
Here to consecrate an altar,  
Holy scripture, holy psalter.  
Yea, beyond dogmatic fission,  
Here is ritual provision :  
Multi-coloured cloths and bands,  
Holy water for the hands  
Flowing neither cold nor torrid,  
Sacred ashes for the forehead  
Gathered where the flame of day  
Burns a glory into clay.

Yea, when hearts have learned the craft  
That can break love's casual shaft,  
And can rise in quiet woods  
Into Love's immortal moods,  
Such exalted tenderness  
Seems the dreaming brow to bless  
That the dragons of desire  
Vanish in creative fire,  
And futilities of thought  
Scatter dustily to nought,  
While the soul, in deep repose  
Lifted into vision, knows  
Spirit-freedom, loosed from sense,  
Joy that needs no penitence.

Ah ! such moments yet must fade  
Till the soul all debts has paid  
Unto darkness, and can look  
On the earth as on a book  
Shining, throbbing with the hymn  
Of its heavenly paradigm.

Still, a reminiscent beat  
Times a poet's homing feet  
Where a mountain-forest river,  
Swift on sand, round granite sliver,  
Chants high deeds for panegyrics,  
Lilts alluring themes for lyrics,

Under boughs that richly shed  
Nourishment for heart and head,  
Fancy's fruitage roundly ripened  
As the early riser's stipend.

*Bulbul*, not the Persian nightingale, but a favourite crested bird in India.

*Shola*, ancient forests on the Nilgiri Mountains, South India.

*Tola*, Indian unit of weight, three eighths of an ounce.

## "IN THE HOUR OF THE PASSING OVER . . ."

### *To Humayun Mirza*

IN the hour of the passing over from night to day  
My heart with the heart of nature moved in play ;  
In blind-man's-buff between the sightless and sight,  
The dance of light with darkness, of darkness with  
light.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day  
A breeze came up in the consequential way  
Of youth on naive adventure—and passed me by  
With a wistful, unaccomplished old-man sigh.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day  
A crystal peace in folded creek and bay  
And on broad-spread water, a light washed clean of  
fire,  
Reflected a sky of unfulfilled desire ;

Till the mouths and hands of the wizards, wind and  
dawn,  
Transformed pure crystal to unreflecting fawn  
That told how earth with water mingled lay  
In the hour of the passing over from night to  
day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day,  
At the shake of dawn on its shoulder, a granite-grey

Right royal hill, that had slept the sleep of the  
proud,  
Resigned its haughty dreams to a melting cloud ;

A cloud that wrapped the dreams in a magian  
cloak

Invisibly, and, as waving camphor-smoke  
Before an image of Godhead, faded away  
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day  
Two owls from somewhere to somewhere had some-  
thing to say  
Of night near gone that must wait for another  
night :

Meanwhile, snug sleep in the dark sweet heart of  
light.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day  
Two birds besprinkled the thinning darkness with  
spray  
Of cascades of song to empty the heart's delight  
In the dimness before the dumbness that comes  
with sight.

In the hour of the passing over from night to day  
I heard one Voice through myriad voices say :  
"Give ear to the silent, as unto that which  
speaks.

All life with life a rich communion seeks."

And as this was only saying that life is love,  
A thing I have always known, like a mated dove  
My heart to the heart of nature chanted this lay  
In the hour of the passing over from night to day.

Thippagondanahalli, Mysore,  
September 24, 1936.



IN MEMORY OF GOVINDA KRISHNA  
CHETTUR

I

THIS is the season when he raised his eyes  
Unto the hills, and the dim *sholas* sought  
Where winging singing meanings might be caught  
And caged in lyrics beautiful and wise,—  
A man who was a sonnet in disguise :  
Body and brain the octave strongly wrought ;  
Soul the sestet that took his fledgling thought  
And sent it singing somewhere in the skies.  
He loved the light of dawn, the rainy gloom,  
The tints wherewith the Nilgiri summer pied  
Hill-ways and wood-ways ; loved the cataract's  
plume ;  
But, since his spirit was cerulean-skied,  
Chiefly he loved the jacaranda's bloom  
Of paradisal blue . . . And then he died.

He died when dreaming youth had made an end  
 Of nature's roseate subterfuge and lure ;  
 And manhood, fixed in that which shall endure,  
 Questions the dooms that life and death portend.  
 Life, proffering its ladder, said : " Ascend  
 To thine own eminence, assigned, secure,  
 Thou who are princely-statured, spirit-pure,  
 Noble as son, as lover, father, friend."  
 Ah God ! when fullness empties, before time  
 Can ease the slow subsidence of the sea  
 Unto its natural ebb, what broken chime  
 Jangles the gloom, what subtle agony  
 Of vision quenched and uncompleted rhyme  
 Haunts the dim margin of mortality.

### III

Yet may we the heart's indigence attire  
In faith that Death no warrant hath to kill  
Incarnate spirit's unaccomplished will  
To reach perfection's purifying fire ;  
That with Great Life our little lives conspire  
Through time a timeless Purpose to fulfil,  
And from eternities of cloud distil  
The definitions of the heart's desire.  
Oh ! ends not all in the untoward event  
That gives rich Death the richer half of life.  
With his the hidden destinies are blent  
Of all who shared his dreams with beauty rife,  
Participants in calm accomplishment  
Beyond the clamant borders of our strife.

#### IV

And if our eyes, grief-curtained, now are blind  
To all save death's immobile mystery,  
Yet may imagination soar and see  
A poet, premature to heaven, find  
Some lack of honey in unearthly wind,  
Some tincture absent in immensity ;  
And high blue hills and a blue-blossoming tree  
In hungry reminiscence call to mind.  
Then, surely, God, in unfulfilled desire  
That dead young poets bear beyond death's hour,  
Finds hints how heaven may be shaped entire,  
And life through lyric forms reach purer power,  
And pours through earth-made moulds celestial fire—  
And lo ! a jacaranda breaks in flower !

## AGNOSIS

### I

HE watched a magian weave a potent spell  
To guard a region sacred and apart ;—  
But lived to see uncharmed rebellion start  
And lay in dust a ravaged citadel.  
He heard a pythoness assuredly tell  
Of Argo homing on a doubtless chart ;—  
And asked if Gods, or man's God-hungry heart,  
Fashioned the dream that in confusion fell.  
And when his own 'tranced ear grew almost glad  
At phantom words that promised crown and throne  
And orb and his own will's delight, a gad  
Silenced the flattering Voice with doubt full-grown  
That he, by self-made sorceries, being mad  
For the divine, but divinised his own.

## II

Rivers that heed not from what springs they start,  
But only run and sing, would fain coerce  
My blood with their wild race, and make my verse  
Chant the sufficing dogma of the heart.  
But in the brain the silent Watcher seeks  
To know what Hands, outliving quick and dead,  
Love's patina on life's rude metal spread,  
And know what Voice beyond love's uttering speaks.  
Only in that discovery shall we,  
Beloved ! find sure retort when doubt assails  
Of love that faileth as the body fails ;  
Thus meet corruption incorruptibly,  
And step, beyond all planetary snares,  
With confident feet up the sidereal stairs.

## A POETESS ATTAINS TWENTYONE

*To Nathalia Crane*

I SAW the setting sun and rising moon  
Look on each other through declining light,  
And dying Day bequeath his golden boon  
Changed into silver currency of night.  
But after sleep and dreaming-time were done  
Under night's rich star-teaseled coverlet,  
I saw reversed in place the moon and sun ;  
And what had set now rose, what rose now set.  
And both were beautiful alluring lies  
To assuage the loneliness of time and space ;  
But past the need of uncorrupted eyes  
That look undazed the eternal in the face ;  
That in your youth surmised the ancient sage,  
As yours, young wisdom masked in laughing age.

## FOR A MARRIAGE ANNIVERSARY

J. H. C.—M. E. G.—APRIL 9, 1903

### I

THE vase's umbra, cast upon the wall,  
Swings slowly left and right—which is absurd  
Seeing the vase no gossamer's breadth has stirred.  
Yet thus the dawn-man saw things magical !  
And shall we break such moments that enthrall,  
Merely because a wandering wind has purred  
Through leaves that sentinel the sleeping bird,  
And swung a hanging lamp ?—and that is all.  
All ? Nay, no wind yet flurried land or sea  
Lacking assents from here to Capricorn ;  
Nor ever stirred a spirit-breeze unborn  
Out of the soul's aeonian wizardry !—  
Ah love ! when first your heart by mine reposed,  
Somewhere twin stars a sundered cycle closed !



Rikiu, the choice tea-master<sup>1</sup>, for his prince  
 Laid out the daily ceremonial tea  
 Approached through Morning-glories. But, lest he,  
 His lord, at too much loveliness might wince,  
 The master suffered not his sword to mince  
 Its whetted speech, and slashed the garden free  
 Of blooms—save one to deck triumphantly  
 The tokonoma<sup>2</sup>, matchless then or since.  
 . . . And as Noguchi<sup>3</sup> the quaint story told,  
 I thought of one (I cannot name his name,  
 Since modesty forbids) who did the same  
 In an invisible garden, to unfold  
 Before a princess, hour by common hour,  
 His heart's unchallenged and unwithering flower.

<sup>1</sup> Japan, sixteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> The corner in a Japanese guest-room for one picture, one vase, one flower.

<sup>3</sup> Yone Noguchi, the Japanese poet : a memory of 1919-1920.

### III

Had I but loved you in the way of men  
Of sensual mind, and worshipped not your soul,  
Well might I dread the lees in passion's bowl,  
Their jaded palate wishing now was then.  
But, love ! your spirit's highlands glimpsed at dawn  
Have still at dusk a distant virgin peak,  
With hints of culminations yet to seek  
Round crystal streams from cloud-hid fountains  
drawn.

Oh ! freed from tyrannies of touch and sight,  
Yet from their sweetness feathering love's wing,  
Shall my heart quail from our dear earth to spring  
When you take off upon your heavenward flight ?  
Nay, but in highest heaven where you shall bide,  
My soul, ascending, shall be at your side.

## BEAUTY'S EXILE

BECAUSE I have loved Beauty for the sake  
Of Beauty alone, nor ever yet mistook  
For her true self the loveliest, wisest book,  
Or anything the hand of man can make,  
Or Kinchinjunga's peak, or Leman lake,  
But all men's local zealotry forsook ;  
On every path for hint of her I look,  
And from all boughs her rumouring blossom shake  
Traitor to all allegiances of mind,  
Truant from every house and school and mart,  
Apostate from all scriptures save her tome,  
I follow Beauty down each veering wind,  
From land, from faith, from all but one great heart  
Exiled—with Beauty's universe for home !

## INVITATION AT SUNSET

COME where the coriander its aromatic breath  
Exhales as a loosened spirit that seeks not the boon  
    of rest ;  
Where, high in the tamarind, mews like a kitten the  
    bird of death,  
Its eye on the chittering weaver-bird that shrinks to  
    its nest.

Holy the daylight was. As holy shall be the dark.  
Holy the place and the moment where life to life  
    now calls.  
Holy the shrine-topped *kondas* that east and west-  
    ward mark.  
The Day-God's myriad births and myriad burials.

Shall we hold that the day's fulfilment is all on the  
    forehead bowed  
Of Light by Darkness dethroned and humbled in  
    red retreat ?  
Nay, look you ! above the standards of Night a  
    crimson cloud  
Floats as a flag from a bastion denying the Day's  
    defeat.

A million days . . . and a million . . . and  
    the end thereof who knows ?  
What will be, will be. What is, our lifted hands  
    acclaim.

Lost not in the sweet and splendid sadness of how  
Day goes,  
We lose not the joy of the triumph and wonder of  
how it came.

*Kondas*—Telugu, hills ; Basanikonda and Maliakonda as seen  
from Madanapalle on the southern Deccan.

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